THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI S.R. BOMMAI) : (a) and (b). Yes. Sir. Social activists and women organisations had protested against the Miss World Pageant held at Bangalore on 23rd November, 1996 for a variety of reasons ranging from commodification of women to disparagement of Indian Womanhood.

(c) The Government acknowledges the right of freedom of expression of all sections of society.

Vacant Posts of Ambassadors

1327. SHRI SUSHIL CHANDRA : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) the total number of Indian ambassadors functioning in various countries, category-wise;

(b) the posts of ambassadors which are lying vacant, country-wise and the time by which these posts are likely to be filled up; and

(c) the number of ambassadors who belong to IFS and IAS categories and the number of such ambassadors who have been taken from non-Government sectors and who are not member of any specific Government Service?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) As of November, 1996, there are 100 Heads of Mission - 73 Ambassadors and 27 High Commissioners - working in various countries.

(b) At present, eleven posts of Heads of Mission are lying vacant. Of these, six Heads of Mission have already been appointed and are in the process of completing formalities for joining their respective Missions in Cambodia, Cuba, Syria, Vietnam, Yemen and Federal Republic of Yugosiavia. Action is underway to appoint Heads of Mission in Burkina Faso, Croatia, Maldives, Mozambique and North Korea.

(c) Out of 100 Heads of Mission presently functioning in various countries, 91 are career Diplomats belonging to the IFS. The other nine are eminent persons who have been drawn from various fields of public life but at present do not belong to any specific Government Service.

[Translation]

Purchasing of Ships

1328. SHRI K.D. SULTANPURI : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) the name of ports for which orders have been placed for purchasing of ships;

(b) whether any funds have been allocated in this regard;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the time by which these ships will be ready for passengers and for carrying goods?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) No Major Port has placed orders for purchasing of any ships.

(b) to (d). Do not arise.

Youth Policy

1329. SHRI GANGA CHARAN RAJPUT : Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government propose to announce any Youth Policy like Foreign Policy, Agricultural Policy and Industrial Policy;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government propose to take any effective measures to provide jobs to the unemployed youths of the country; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI DHANUSHKODI ATHITHAN R.) : (a) and (b). A National Youth Policy already exists. There is a proposal to re-formulate the Policy with a view to making it more need based.

(c) and (d). The existing Youth Policy, provides the youth with maximum access to education which, in addition to developing their alround personality, imparts appropriate professional and vocational training with a view to enabling them to avail of employment opportunities. Further, the Department of Youth Affairs & Sports have been implementing a number of schemes to impart skill development training to youth.

[English]

Falling of Nutrition Level

1330. KUMARI SUSHILA TIRIYA : Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that nutrition levels in the country are falling at an alarming rate;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether it is also a fact that National Nutritional Council set up by Government has had any meetings;

(d) if so, the details of the meetings and the decisions taken therein; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI S.R. BOMMAI) : (a) and (b). No, Sir. The level of nutrition has actually improved from